

Testimony by Mark A. Mitchell, M.D., MPH  
In Support of HB 6526  
AAC Toxics Disclosure and Innovation for Healthy  
Children

Senator Bartolomeo, Representative Urban and members of the Committee, I am submitting this testimony in strong support of HB 6526 An Act Concerning Toxics Disclosure and Innovation for Healthy Children.

As a public health official, I decided to dedicate my career to environmental health because of the large number of diseases that are increasing in frequency that are related to environmental exposures—primarily chemical exposures. This is especially true for low income people and in communities of color. I believe that one of the most effective and least expensive ways that Connecticut can prevent disease and protect the public health is to enact strong laws regulating dangerous chemicals—particularly those that affect children disproportionately.

I am currently engaged on the national level with reform of the Toxic Substances Control Act and have been appalled at what is happening. Even though the American Chemistry Council, lead by ExxonMobil, and other industry groups claim that they want and are working for chemical policy reform, they are working feverishly behind the scenes to block any efforts toward compromise to achieve real reform.

As a representative of the National Medical Association, I was part of discussions between industry, health groups, and other public interest groups to see if we could understand each others concerns with respect to chemical policy and move toward an approach that would be mutually beneficial. When it became apparent that we were getting close to agreement, industry shut down the discussions. When Sen. Lautenberg included much of the compromise language that we had discussed in his revised Safe Chemical Act, which was passed out of committee on a party line vote, they attacked it and mischaracterized it. If that were not enough, they then started punishing companies that continued to engage in any discussions to reach a real solution. ACC started blocking their access to key Congressional members to discuss this and any other issues that the companies had. They are now in the process of getting Sen. Vitter of Louisiana to sponsor a bill that is being developed without input from health and public interests groups, Democrats, or even industry groups that are seen to be more balanced on the issues. From press reports, it seems that the bill will focus solely on business interests without looking at public health.

For these reasons, it is critical that Connecticut act now to protect our children by moving forward with our own version of comprehensive chemical policy reform. There is little reason to believe that there will be any protections from Washington any time soon. Scientific evidence of health effects of toxic chemicals in children's products continues to

mount—for example, the study released three days ago showing links between Bisphenol A and asthma.

In conclusion, children are not just little adults. They breathe more air, drink more water, and absorb more things through their skin than adults on a proportionate basis. Their organs are immature and still developing and are therefore, more susceptible to toxic injury than those of adults. Rather than regulating chemical by chemical, Connecticut should adopt a systematic and comprehensive approach to reviewing the science and adopting laws to protect our children as proposed in this bill.

Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony.

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